

UPDATE 21

Royal Commission St Ann's Special School



18 March 2014

The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse commenced its 9th public hearing in Adelaide yesterday where it is examining the responses by the Catholic Archdiocese of Adelaide and the South Australian Police to allegations of child sexual abuse against children with disabilities at St Ann's Special School in Adelaide.

At the same time, the Royal Commission's hearing into the case of John Ellis continues in Sydney.

Presiding Commissioner of the St Ann's case, Justice Jennifer Coate, warned the evidence would be distressing.

Counsel Assisting the Royal Commission, Sophie David outlined the details of the case of convicted paedophile Brian Perkins who was a bus driver at St Ann's at the time of the abuse. He also volunteered in the woodwork class and provided respite care to parents on weekends. He worked at the school from 1986 to 1991.

In 1991 pornographic photographs depicting the abuse of children from St Ann's were discovered in Perkins' home. In 2003 Perkins was convicted of and pleaded guilty to five sexual offences against three St Ann's students. He died in 2009 while serving a 10 year prison sentence.

The Commission heard from former St Ann's student, LH who was abused by Perkins between the ages of 11 and 15. His evidence was graphic and disturbing and went to the impact of the abuse.

The Royal Commission also heard from the mothers of two other boys who were abused by Perkins.

LK, the mother of LB revealed details of the terrible impact of the abuse on her son, and of her experience of the drawn out process once evidence emerged of Perkins crimes.

Helen Gitsham, mother of David, also gave evidence of the impact of abuse on her son and on their family. Her extensive evidence detailed the difficulties she and her husband experienced with the police, the school and the church, as they sought justice for their son.

The second day of the hearing heard evidence from the South Australian police. Questions to Detective Sergeant Leonid Mosheev sought to establish a deeper understanding of police procedures in place in 1991 in relation to the investigation of sexual assault and to the treatment of children and people with a disability. Perkins was arrested in 1993 and refused bail, but on appeal, he was released on bail and absconded to Queensland. Further questions sought to establish the course of the police investigation, the basis for charges laid against Perkins and decisions taken by the police and DPP in relation to criminal action taken against Perkins in relation to offences against St Ann's students. Perkins was eventually extradited, and convicted in 2003.

The hearing continues.

For more information on the Truth Justice and Healing Council go to: www.tjhcouncil.org.au

For information on the Royal Commission go to: <http://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/>

Contact: Michael Salmon 0417 495 018